

A CLOSE CORPORATION.

BY RUTH PUTNAM.

SEVEN little girls were having a solemn meeting. It was no light and trivial matter that was occupying their minds. Indeed, to judge by their faces you would have thought that by some strange and unexpected turn of the wheel of Fate, the direction of the affairs of state had fallen into their hands, so careworn and solemn were their expressions. They were about to undertake a mighty enterprise. They were to start a paper. After some discussion as to the proper mode of beginning, one little girl said she was sure the first thing was to choose a president — wherever her papa went they always did that. Nothing could ever be done without a president, “especially in a republic, where there is n’t a king,” she added. Her sister Clara said yes; Edith did n’t usually know much about useful things, but she was right that time, and besides the president, they must have two “vices,” a treasurer, a writing person, whose name she could n’t remember, and a committee. The memory of the others supplied the name of secretary, and suggested that “vices” were really presidents when the other one could n’t come. They then proceeded to have an election. Eva was elected president. “She is n’t quite the oldest, but her name is such a very ancient one,” remarked Edith. Clara was chosen secretary; Lucy, treasurer; Edith and Alice, “vices”; and the two others, a committee; so that each one was dignified with an office. Then the matter was thoroughly discussed. They decided on *The Rose* as the name of the paper. Each one had the right to bring her own contributions.

“But, of course, there must n’t be too many long stories,” said Edith. “It will take a long time to publish my ‘Egyptian Adventures,’ and there is never more than one long story in a magazine.”

“We can have two poems a number,” said the president, whose age was twelve; “and I should say that we ought generally to let Agnes have one of those, because, of course, she belongs — even if she is ’way off in the Western Hemisphere.”

“Well, I *do* think,” broke in Cora, rather derisively. “Are n’t we all in the Western Hemisphere? You’d better study geography.”

“Is n’t California more in the Western Hemisphere than New York is?” asked the president, meekly.

This brought on a discussion not pertinent to the new magazine, in which the more practical Clara came out strong, and finally demonstrated, by means of a half-eaten apple, that if you were *there*, you *were* there, and “you could n’t be any more than that!” as she added, triumphantly.

Their first plan was to write out their magazines, each one doing three, and they thought they might have twenty-one subscribers.

I should mention that Agnes, then in California, had been a former schoolmate of the small group, and was to be associated in the enterprise, but, of course, she could not aid in the labor of it.

Well, they also arranged that each one should write to her friends and ask them to subscribe. The proceeds, after expenses, were to go to the poor.

“Naturally,” said Cora, “it will be like a grown-up party — we must invite a great many more than we expect to come.”

Then they separated, after composing the first number from copy already on hand.

It was a busy week for the editorial staff. The twenty-one numbers were copied, but the ink was obstreperous, the pens were filled with evil spirits, and sometimes little sisters *would* joggle the tables at critical moments so that horrid big blots would appear on the laboriously written pages, and the work of an hour or more would be destroyed. Ah, the lot of editor and printer combined was not an easy one!

Finally, some grown-up person suggested that a poor deaf-mute in the village had a printing-press upon which he was in the habit of printing programmes, bill-heads, etc., and that perhaps he would print their paper cheaply. This individual was visited, and after a lively pantomimic conversation with the finger alphabet, which one of the little girls knew, they made a favorable bargain with him.

So now, instead of twenty-one subscribers, they could have fifty. Oh, it would be splendid! — and they would have to correct proof!

The letters were written to their friends in New York, and then came several days of happy anticipation in which they saw the subscription mount to one hundred names, imagined the money pouring into the treasury, and planned out all the good they could do for the poor, next Christmas. Then, too,

they made up their next number from Edith's somewhat grimy store and the cherished productions of the others.

At the end of the week, Clara received the following letter from her cousin in New York :

"DEAR CLARA : My little friend, Ada Croswell, and I are going for the same subject as you, to help poor people. We are going to work real hard, whenever there is something to do, so that we can earn some money, and, as she goes to Sunday-school, she will give it there.

"About your magazine, I do not care so much for that, but, as I am fond of writing, I will give you another plan.

"Suppose I am to give you five cents instead of ten, and instead of taking the magazine, I would like to write stories for it, if you have no objection. But, of course, if you would rather not, why just say so. I will renew my old stories, and give you my best.

"Good-bye, from your loving cousin, GERTRUDE."

This was not altogether satisfactory to Clara as she read it, and she proceeded at once to call a meeting extraordinary.

It was a stormy session. The idea had never entered their editorial heads that other contributions than their own should appear in their precious periodical. Clara thought the fact that this was their cousin ought to have some weight. But Eva suggested that perhaps all their cousins might write, and sometimes one's friends were just the same, and more, too, than one's cousins. And — if every one wrote, what would the poor editors do with all *their* things? The question was left unsettled.

The next mail brought the following letter from Elise, another cousin of Edith and Clara, in Newport.

"MY DEAR CLARA : We would be delighted to take the paper, but I wish I could wright some stories for it; would you mind if I wrote a story for this next month's paper, and if it is not nise enough please tell me would you mind having me write for the paper. If you would not like it write and tell me. I think it would be a great deel of fun to write for the paper. I will write this short story, and if you would not want me to write for it don't hesitate to tell me, because I suppose you have enough. Good-bye, from
ELISE."

This letter was discussed as hotly as Gertrude's had been. The board were not quite so indignant, because no reduction in subscription-price was asked, and the whole tone of the letter was more modest. But they became more and more convinced that, however good the articles might be, they really and truly had no use for them — "because," as Edith remarked plaintively, looking at her beloved pile of MSS. before her (she had brought it to the meeting to put certain arti-

cles to vote), "We will just have to put all our own things away again, and all the proof we read will be other people's work. Oh, it will be *horrid!*"

The following morning another letter arrived for Clara, from Winifred in the city :

"DEAR CLARA : I think your idea of a real printed magazine is just splendid, and I will be glad to take it. I suppose you know that I can write poetry; things about ghosts and water-witches and splendid weird things are what I like best. If you have any room in your paper I could let you have them. Of course, I would n't charge anything, because you are going to give the money to the poor, and I'd like to help do that.

"Your friend, WINIFRED."

Then came a letter from Agnes, inclosing two poems, three rebuses, one charade, and some chapters of a continued story by herself. After mentioning these inclosures, she went on to say, "I know three real nice girls in San Francisco who think they could write some stories and poetry if you would like them to. I send you some of my writings. The rest are locked up in Mamma's trunk. I'll send them along with the girls' stories."

Clara carried the two communications to the meeting and read them aloud. A dead silence fell upon the assembly, and then Edith burst into tears and said, trying to pull her handkerchief through the mass of papers in her pocket, "It is *too* dreadful to have to say 'No' to Agnes — but, *all* the girls in *all* California! — Oh, that is *too much!*" and she sobbed bitterly until she discovered that she had drawn out a MS. with her handkerchief, and that her tears were fast effacing the writing. She borrowed another handkerchief, rushed to the window, and was so absorbed in trying to dry her beloved paper in the sun, and to replace the blotted-out words, that she took no further part in the discussion that day.

But the discussion was continued without her and became very serious. For they began to feel more and more the weight of their enterprise — now that so many people wished to share in it. At last, it was solemnly decided to announce to the world that, for a year at least, theirs was to be a close corporation. *Perhaps*, when they had used up *all* they had written, they would take the *best* their friends could write.

So, next year there may be a chance for some of you to become contributors to *The Rose*.

This all happened in America. I write this in France, and here I find that the presents liked best for Christmas, by the little French girls whom I know, are blank books in which to write their poems and stories.

THE LETTER-BOX.

MOUNT VERNON ON THE POTOMAC, VA.

DEAR ST. NICHOLAS: As my older sister wrote to you last year, I will contribute a letter this year. They are now restoring the slave-quarters here at Mount Vernon, the money for which was raised by the school-children of Kansas; and, after the slave-quarters are finished, all the buildings that were here in Washington's time will be restored. On one side of this building is a white marble slab, and inscribed on it is the following: "Restored by the Schools of Kansas, 1889." I think the school-children of the United States have done very well for Mount Vernon,—for the summer-house was rebuilt by the school-children of Louisiana. On the Fourth of July the tomb was decorated beautifully. The most prominent and beautiful wreath was presented by the President and Mrs. Harrison. We are so fond of the ST. NICHOLAS that whenever it comes we have a regular scramble to settle which shall read it first. It has been kindly presented to us for three or four years:

Sincerely your little friend,

ANNA HOWELL D——.

HAIKU MAUI, SANDWICH ISLANDS.

DEAR ST. NICHOLAS: I live on the Sandwich Islands, and the people are not cannibals, but mostly white people. There are eight races of people here. My father and mother are Americans, but I was born here. I have a sister who is a year younger than myself, and three brothers. My oldest brother is in Yale College. I am ten years old.

I have a little garden. It has a La France rose bush, nasturtiums, marigolds, morning-glories, dahlias, mignonette, and other flowers.

There are palm-trees and date-palms in our yard. Our date-palms have borne dates before. The pine-apples do not grow on trees but near the ground; first the leaves grow out of the ground, and then the pine-apple grows out of the middle.

There are no elephants here, nor bears, nor monkeys. Mamma and Papa take the ST. NICHOLAS here.

This is the first letter that I have ever written to you.

Once a lady wrote in a paper that there were monkeys here when there are not.

Your loving friend,

GRACE D——.

RIPON, WIS.

DEAR ST. NICHOLAS: I love your fine magazine dearly, and we would all find it very hard to part with you. I attend the public school.

Ripon, my native town, is a very pretty place of over four thousand inhabitants and contains a fine college. My two sisters, who are both older than I, attend Ripon College, which has about three hundred scholars. Commencement is the event of the season and lasts about a week.

The last day of May we had a snow-storm, which seemed rather out of place at that time of the year.

We live in a large white house on Main Street, facing

two streets, with a fine lawn where we have a croquet-set. Among my favorite authors are Bayard Taylor, Miss Holmes, Miss Alcott, and Mrs. Wister.

I am very fond of music and take lessons on the piano, and I also write many stories.

A paper in Milwaukee offered ten prizes in gold for the best original stories by children in Wisconsin, between the ages of ten and sixteen. One hundred and twenty-seven stories were sent in; and I wrote one, receiving the eighth prize, of five dollars, which I thought was quite a beginning for a young writer.

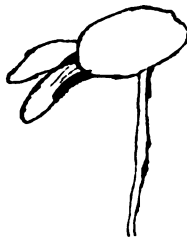
Your sincere reader, MARY LILLIAN S——.

SYRACUSE, N. Y.

DEAR ST. NICHOLAS: I am a little girl, ten years old. I have a little brother, five years old. I like "A Bit of Color." What do you like best? My little brother likes the "Bunny Stories." He is particularly fond of "Cuddledown." The other day he was playing with some daisies, when suddenly he said, "Oh, Mamma! here is Cuddledown." We looked and saw that he had pulled all the white petals off a daisy but two, and they looked just like the Bunny's ears. I will show you by a picture. In this way he made the whole of the Bunny family.

Your little reader,

BERTHA C. F——.



RIPON, WIS.

DEAR ST. NICHOLAS: I live in Fort Keogh, Montana, but two years ago my Mamma died and I came here to stay with my aunt and to go to college. I am thirteen years old and study commercial law and botany. The only pet I have is a baby brother who will be two years old the fifth of next month. Don't you think he is a pretty nice pet? My Papa is a captain in the Twenty-second Regiment of United States Infantry, and is stationed at Fort Keogh, Montana.

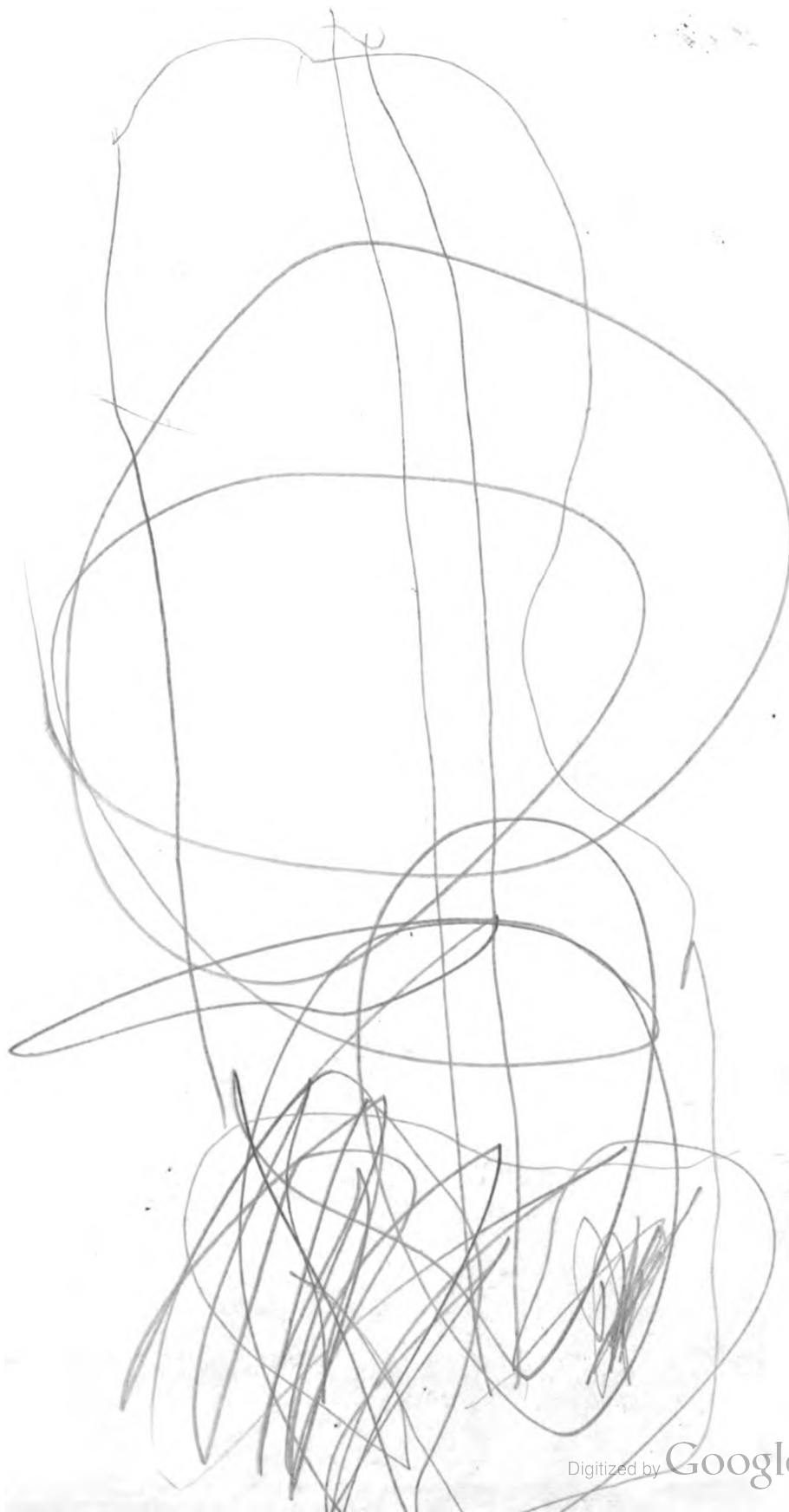
He was stationed at Fort Lewis, Colorado, before Mamma died, and then he was ordered to Fort Keogh, and last summer I visited him, and liked it better than I did Fort Lewis.

I will try to describe the fort as accurately as possible. There is a parade-ground where the soldiers drill, and around that are the officers' and soldiers' quarters, and back of them are the graveyard, the store-houses, the Northern Pacific Railroad, the trader-store and post-office, the bowling-alley, depot, and the post gardens.

There is a wagon road that goes to Miles City, two and a half miles from the fort. You have to cross the Yellowstone River on the way, and in one fording-place there is a ferry that you can go over on when the river is high, but no citizen can cross without paying, because it is for the soldiers when they go to town.

Your loving reader,

FRANK B. K——.



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